

Sold Out by Jeff Strite

Luke 18:18-18:30

Ravi Zacharias tells the story about a boy that loved collecting marbles. He lived next door to a little girl who had a lot of candy.

She said to him: "If you'll give me all of your marbles, I'll give you all of my candy."

He said he'd think about it. The next day, he hid a few of the marbles in his room and offered the rest to the little girl for her candy. That night, he couldn't get to sleep. He tossed and he turned and he turned and he tossed all night because he was so troubled.

And what do you think troubled him so much he couldn't sleep? What troubled him was the the thought:

"Did she really give me all of her candy?"

In our story this morning, we meet a man who wanted everything God could give. He came to Jesus and said: "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Luke 18:18
He wanted everything God could give.

In response, Jesus asked him for everything he could give: "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." Luke 18:22

ILLUS: Some time back I watched a video of a popular young preacher who talked about the importance of taking up your cross and following Christ. He was very earnest and powerful in his presentation... but then he said:

"Jesus taught that the rich should sell all their possessions and give their money to the poor."

ILLUS: A few years ago, the Obama administration maintained that IF the rich didn't give more to underwrite certain government social programs that that would be "morally troubling".

Supporting that belief, comedian Stephen Colbert referred to this story about the rich young ruler we've read today and said roughly the same thing that preacher had said in that video: "Jesus actually said rich people should sell all their possessions and give the money to the poor."

Now, there are a couple of problems with Colbert's statement:

1st Jesus never told the rich to sell all they had and give it to the Government. I can say that without the slightest fear of contradiction. It never happened.

2nd Jesus never told the rich to sell all they had and give it all to the poor.

Now granted, the Bible does teach that the rich are responsible to help the poor. Greater wealth calls for greater responsibility and God expects the wealthy to step up and help those who are less fortunate. But Jesus NEVER said that the rich should sell ALL they had and then give it to the poor.

He ONLY said that to the rich young ruler. And He only said it to him because this young man was diseased. He was infected. He was sick in his soul.

- He was infected with greed.
- He had a sick with selfishness

The source of his disease was his love for his possessions and his money. And there was only one cure for his disease – he needed to sell everything, give the money to the poor and follow Jesus.

If this young man wanted ALL that Jesus could give then he needed to give Jesus ALL that he had. Jesus was calling for him to be sold out for Him. In fact, Jesus did that repeatedly to everyone who wanted to follow Him. He repeatedly called for His followers to be sold out for Him.

In Luke 9, Jesus said "... a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." (In other words, if this many followed Jesus, he might not have a place to live or sleep).

He said to another man, "Follow me."

But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family."

Jesus replied, "No-one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." Luke 9:57-62

Over and over again, Jesus told these folks to pick up their crosses and follow Him, He repeatedly called them to be sold out for Him.

Essentially, Jesus was saying: "if you're not going to give me everything... don't bother me." Jesus isn't interested in just some of their marbles...He wanted it all.

For Jesus – it was all or nothing.

ILLUS: When I talk to people who want to become Christians I go through the usual topics of Faith, Repentance, Confession and Baptism. But I'll spend a great deal of time focusing on the topic of "confessing Jesus as Lord" that's talked about in Romans 10:9-10.

I explain that in the days of Jesus, if you called someone your "Lord" it meant that they owned you. They were the Master, you were the slave.

"Did slaves own anything?" I'll ask.

"No." they'll respond.

It's the same when you become Christians. When you call Jesus you're Lord, you have turned ownership of your possessions over to Him.

I then take out my wallet and explain that everything in that wallet belongs to God. I give Him a portion of that every Sunday, but it ALL belongs to Him. The money I don't give to the church is spent on my bills and my entertainment and my food, etc. but it is all spent with the understanding that it is God's money... not mine. What I use that money for should reflect the God that I serve.

In the same way (I'll pull out pictures of my kids), my family belongs to Jesus. They're not mine, they're His. And so God will hold me accountable for how I treat them.

My house, my car, my clothes – they're all his.

Jesus wants your wallet, your house, your car, your family. JESUS WANTS YOU.

Then I ask the convert if that is what they want to do to commit to in their lives. If they do, then we talk about baptism.

ILLUS: Year ago, I read about a church in South America where the preacher had gotten really intense with his sermons on sacrificing for Jesus, and the importance of turning all your possessions over to Him. Several of the people became so convicted that they literally handed over the deeds to their homes.

The leaders of that church were amazed... and then concerned. They realized they had no way of using all these homes for ministry and that if they sold the properties, the people who had given them to the church would be homeless.

So, they prayed about those deeds... for a long time.

Then they called the homeowners into the church building and explained that they were accepting these deeds in the name of Jesus. But they were returning the deeds to them under the understanding that the homes NOW belonged to Jesus. They could live in the homes, but they no longer belonged to them. They were now caretakers of God's property and they would expect to find ways of using their homes for Jesus.

Essentially, that's what we do when we make Jesus our LORD. We turn over our homes, our cars, our families, our bank accounts... our very lives. It's all HIS. WE are all His.

We have to come to grips with the fact that God wants all of our marbles - all of our resources - and that He wants us to USE those resources to invest in His kingdom. Just as an example:

ILLUS: I have a home. I have a mortgage payment every month; I pay the Electric, Gas, Water, Sewage; I sweep the carpets, mow the yard, shovel the snow, etc.; I buy groceries for the Refrigerator. Those are normal investments I need to make in my home every month.

But now, every once in awhile, I need to invest in something MORE for that house.

This summer I invested in a roof for my garage. A month or so ago my microwave went belly-up and I had to buy a new one. And as time goes on, I'll have to make other items that go above and beyond the normal monthly bills I have to pay.

But I have to do that. If I'm going to be INVESTED in that home I need to make those kinds of planned and unplanned expenditures.

The Bible says that we are part of God's... Building.

Not the physical building we're meeting in. But rather we part of God's church - His spiritual House.

Ephesians 2:19-22 says we are "...fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."

In other words... you and I are God's building. This body of believers is His Temple. Just like our earthly homes, THIS home (this Spiritual Temple) needs regular investments on our part.

Now, of course, part of that involves giving of our TREASURE. Many in the congregation realize the importance of giving a 10th of their income to underwrite the financial needs of this congregation and they set the example for the rest of us on the importance of that responsibility. They understand the importance of giving of their treasure to maintain God's spiritual house.

But building up this spiritual house also requires us to use our TIME and TALENTS.

- Teaching Sunday School and Bible Studies
- Doing Jr. Church and staffing the Nursery
- Working in the Sound booth, Lead in Music/singing

And on and on and on...

Those are the TIME, TALENT and TREASURES that are necessary to keep this body functioning. They're like the regular daily investments I make in my house. If God's people step up and make those regular investments in God's spiritual house, everything runs fairly smoothly and this church can do great things for God.

But if people don't step up... things begin to disintegrate.

You can't have a great church like this if you expect everyone ELSE to take up the slack.

A great church like this continues to be a great church because everybody says "If it's going to be... it's going to be up to me."

This church will succeed only if the majority of us decide we're going to give our TIME, TALENT and TREASURE to God's kingdom.

But now, every once in a while, someone gets convicted to invest in something bigger.

ILLUS: I talked to a young man from another church just recently who's been taking kids to youth group and church every Sunday, and his minivan just isn't doing the job anymore.

So, he and his wife have decided they need to invest in a 12 or 15 passenger van. It won't belong to the church. They'll pay for it, keep it insured, pay for upkeep, but it will belong to God. The vehicle's main purpose will be in getting kids church that might not get there otherwise get there.

My point is – folks like these are sold out for Jesus. They've put all their marbles on the table and invested them in God's Kingdom. But your marbles are different than their marbles. The cross Jesus asks you pick up is different than their cross.

You have a different mission than they do. A different purpose. A different cross.

Romans 12 tells us that "...each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.

- If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.
- If it is serving, let him serve;
- If it is teaching, let him teach;
- If it is encouraging, let him encourage;
- If it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously;
- If it is leadership, let him govern diligently;
- If it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully." Romans 12:4-8

We all have a body... and that body has parts that do different things.
 My hands serve the body differently than my feet.
 My ears serve the body differently than my eyes.
 My heart serves the body differently than my lungs.
 And yet my earthly body functions best when all those parts do their job.

Your purpose in the body of Christ is different than the person next to you. And the body of Christ NEEDS YOU. If part of my body ceases to function, my body cannot function well. It suffers. And if – no SINCE – you have a gift from God, if you don't use it, the church will be less than it could be.

ILLUS: Now, I'm particularly proud of this church. We have a number of people here who are sold out for Jesus. They invest themselves in God's family here.

- Some go on mission trips.
- Some work in the Food pantry.
- Some work with kids.
- Others work with adults.

Folks here are so sold out so powerfully... that it's infectious.

A couple of years ago, the Bonsett's bought a home in Lafayette (about 45 minutes from here) but they'd come back here to worship every Sunday. Eventually, they came to the Elders and explained that they needed to bloom where they were planted. As much as they hated leaving us, they felt they could serve God better if they picked up with a church in Lafayette and invested their lives there.

You know why they left? You infected them. It's your fault they left.

The Good family left us last month. They'd been coming here for a number of years, but they recently became involved in a ministry called "The Crossing" where they help struggling High School students with their schooling and talk to them about their need for Christ for their lives. They left us to do ministry closer to Indianapolis.

You infected them. It's your fault they left.

Let me repeat: The Body of Christ is made up of many parts, and the body functions best when all the parts do their part. The Body of Christ needs YOU!!!!

So the question for you this morning is this:

Are you doing your part in the Body?

Are you sold out for Jesus?

There are a lot of church goers that aren't sold out.

And you know why they're not?

Well, one reason - for many church goers - is a lack of trust in God's promises.

Remember the story I told at the beginning of the sermon? Remember why that little boy tossed and turned all night long? He wondered: Did she give me ALL her candy? Did she give ALL she promised?

And that's why many people don't sell out for Jesus. They don't believe Jesus will give them ALL that He promised.

Jesus said: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..."

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..."

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..."

Now, what is the rest of the verse?

(Let the audience respond)

Oh yeah - "and ALL these things shall be added unto you as well."

There are church goers all across the nation that don't believe that.

They don't believe that if they seek first God's Kingdom and invest themselves in His church that God will provide ALL they need.

Now, I'm not sure I blame them.

It's tough to believe God sometimes.

But if you don't... the only person who loses out (pause) is YOU.

But if you're willing to put it on the line for Jesus, if you're willing to give Him ownership of all you are and have, if you're willing to put all your marbles on the table... Jesus promises to that all these things shall be added unto you as well.

CLOSE: I went to a Revival over at the Grissom Church of Christ this last week, and I got to talking with their song leader - Trey Moulton. Trey's from Louisiana and he told me that he and his wife are considering a move to New York state to help a struggling church of 35 people up by Buffalo.

They're thinking of moving all the way from Louisiana to New York... for a church that won't hardly be able to afford to pay them to come. Why on earth would they do that?

Well, he and his wife and been convicted that he should get back into preaching and so they left themselves open to God's guidance in this matter... and they are being led to believe this is where God wants them to be. They're convicted by the idea that if they seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness, God will supply their needs.

Now where did Trey get that idea? Well, he told me a story about his grandfather that explained it. Years ago, his grandfather (they called him "Mr. Morris") worked down on the docks in Louisiana. It was good work and good pay and it provided for his family.

But one day a young man came to the boss and asked for a job. He said he needed the money to pay for classes at the nearby college. He was studying to be Doctor, he said, and things were a bit tight.

The boss rather gruffly said: "There's no jobs to be had. Move along."

Trey's grandfather overheard the discussion and threw down his tools. Loudly enough for the rest of the crew to hear him, he said: "If you don't hire that man, we all quit. He wants to go to college to be a Doctor. And we need more men like him."

Bear in mind, Mr. Morris was speaking for all the other dock workers, but as soon as they heard him stand up for this young man they all came to his side and said he was right: "If he doesn't get a job here, we'll all walk off the job."

The crew boss objected that they didn't have room for another worker but they were all in agreement. They insisted this young man get a job. And he did.

Years later, Trey's grandfather contracted cancer. He was lying in a hospital bed when the doctor came into his room and picked up the chart. As the doctor was leafing through the papers, he looked up at him and asked "You don't recognize me do you?"

"No," he replied.

"I'm the young man you threatened to quit your job over so I could pay my way through college." And then he left the room.

Trey said his grandparents never received a single bill for his treatment. That single story of his grandfather standing up for a young college student seemed to sum up Trey's faith in a God who would stand up for him.

Trey believes in a God who promised to give him His all.

And so he's been willing to give his God his all.

That's what followers of Christ do. That's what people who pick up their cross and follow Jesus do. That's what people who are sold out for Him do.

But until you belong to Jesus, and give Him your life, you can't do anything else that will matter.